

CHAPTER TWELVE

A letter came addressed to Bob and me, from the President of the University of Pennsylvania, inviting us to attend the opening of a new Art Gallery which was to be devoted entirely to the sculpture work of R. Tait McKenzie. It was to be called the Lloyd P. Jones Art Gallery, and would contain an out-door court for the larger figures, and located beside the Gimbal Gymnasium where Tait had spent so many happy years. We accepted with pleasure, and decided at once to drive to Philadelphia.

We stopped at Bryn Mawr where Tait had secured my first job for me, in the mid-twenties. It started me on my long career, and my association with Miss Applebee, my wonderful first boss, and Tait's old friend. Old then, and extremely older now, she had astonished the Physical Education world by reaching a record one hundred and five years of age, and still very alert! She credited her long life to coaching field hockey until over ninety, and continuously exercising her muscles. She grieved that now people only relaxed, and would lose all their muscle tone. We then witnessed distinct proof for her statement.

We had dropped in to see my old gym building, and could not resist peeking in the gym door, where I had had classes of over a hundred girls doing rhythmic exercises to music. Alas! I could see only four bodies lying silently on the floor... on mattresses. How life had changed! Tait's "Joy of Effort" had vanished entirely.

This was the same College, where President Woodrow Wilson had been

a professor, Katherine Hepburn and Cornelia Otis Skinner were students.. and now it was Co-Ed! I could hardly believe my eyes.

The entire campus had been surrounded by stone buildings of Tudor design, and included the tall clock-tower of the administration offices, Rockefeller Hall and other residences with their old world turrets and traditional archways leading to the roads beyond. The library still had it's inner court and cloisters, and the flying buttresses of the Tiffany Chapel still added beauty to the building. Inside the Chapel, it was another story! To my horror I found it now ~~was~~ a "Mod Theatre" with the interior stone painted over with garish colours.

A new engineering building stood alone in it's strange architecture, with a red brick narrow tower that had rounded see-through windows at the top, giving the impression a fly bomb had passed their way. Men and women lounged about in a most casual manner, but I understand they are a very intelligent lot. Only time will tell.

On to Philadelphia, we attended the luncheon at the University, followed by the unveiling of the Lloyd P. Jones Art Gallery. It extended to the out-door court where greenery provided an interesting background for the huge figures. Inside the smaller bronze pieces were displayed under perfect lighting conditions. I noticed they did not show the two bronze candle sticks which had been given to me by Ethel. They had been designed for their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary and had a table centre to match. It had been used on my twenty-first birthday party at the house on Pine Street.

I felt that this gallery should have them, so at a later date had them sent to the President as a gift in honour of Tait and to complete the distinguished collection. They were very pleased to accept them.

Following the ceremony, Bob and I joined a group as guests at a Yale vs. Penn football game at Franklin Field. The game was exciting, but for me it was more thrilling to look up at the Franklin Tower dominating the end of the field, and recall the Saturday afternoons I had spent with Tait when he had a studio there. I had a terrific view of a free game, while he worked steadily on his clay models, and seemed to enjoy the company, regardless of the cheers and jeers coming from my direction. He kept on quite undisturbed.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

After our long drive from Philadelphia, and a short period at rest at our home on the Niagara River, Bob and I felt that we might like to try a bus trip as an alternative mode of travel. Atlanta Georgia became our target, as suggested by the McKenzies who lived there. It would give us a brief visit with John and Robert and their families. They were both sons of Tait's brother Bertram McKenzie who remained a Canadian. The boys were born in Canada, and served in the Canadian Air Force during the last war. John was a very tall lad, who seemed always conscious of the fact, proven by a cartoon sketch drawn in my war scrap-book showing him stretched out on an air-force cot with his feet dangling over the end of it, and a short blanket half on the floor. Beside all this was a Bible reference to see Isaiah 28 verse 20 which read: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it". Thus the McKenzie humour and artistic talent was already showing.

His brother Bob had designed his own modern home in a wooded area of the city. The special furniture and lighting were from his own ideas. He built his own coloured television and installed a cummunication system in all the rooms. A high veranda around the back of the house gave you the feeling that you were almost in a tree house, and might find wild animals wandering below, much like the one you read about in Africa. It was no surprise that Bob was a keen architect. Their young sister Dawn Knutsen,

often visited their Mother in Atlanta but a growing family of her own, kept her at home in Jacksonville Florida, so that her contact with her brothers was limited.

Back home again we saw the beautiful trees on the Niagara River Parkway change their gold and red colour to become a dark bronze and drop disconsolately to have the snow finally arrive and bury them completely. The view from nearly all the windows of the house entranced our guests as they watched the dancing blue water in the sunshine now to be seen framed by skeleton tree branches. Alas, they could not see that the water was becoming seriously polluted and the drinking water had to be boiled or imported. During the winter the snow swirled in the sunshine forming glittering patterns, but the wind could stop you in your tracks as you battled your way breathlessly to the mail box, or to find your daily newspaper hidden in the deep drifts of snow. It was unbelievable that the blue wrapped paper roll could disappear so quickly.

Problems began to appear on the horizon, as we were far beyond middle age, and if needed, no city Doctor would care to drive out as far as service road eighteen, although we were listed within the city limits. It worried me considerably that we might perish all on our own.

One day, I shattered my husband, by suggesting the time had arrived when we should think about moving into the central area of the city, where facilities were more available when needed. This shocked him, to say the least. He had lived there for fifteen years, and at long last, had the

place improved, attractive and all set to enjoy his retirement as he had counted on. At the moment he could overlook the hours of grass cutting it required, the septic tank problems, water pollution and even the millions of river flies we battled every summer.

The moving idea took sometime to sink in. It would be much easier to do it in our seventies than our eighties, when we might be forced into it. It finally seemed to be the sensible thing to do, and we both reluctantly agreed.

Then, by chance we discovered a house in an ideal location, on a small corner lot, not hemmed in, a parklike view at the back, spreading across spacious lawns and gardens... that would not require our care, yet add to outdoor living on a terrace we could enjoy without mosquito interruption.

Inside was all the space we could wish for. A few improvements could be added but nothing too extensive. We bought it immediately, and both were excited and happy about our deal.

We then realized we were about to leave for Bermuda, and owned two homes. We left ours in the hands of a capable salesman, who had the offer we wanted, ready for our signature upon our return.

It was a most fortunate move, and we both loved our new home. However fate was not always smiling....

We had a severe water problem to overcome, and it was eventually solved.

Our home was robbed the night before we returned from a trip.

I double fractured my wrist with an operation on it to follow, and with other ailments for Bob and me, we took turns in and out of hospital for a long time, yet thankful we were now in the city.

I felt Tait's influence and power had now evaporated, or remained dormant.

Fortunately, this was not the case.

C H A P T E R F O U R T E E N

Jamie and Irene Leys, formerly owners of the Mill of Kintail phoned us one day, to see if we were going to Edinburgh in September to attend the fiftieth anniversary of the Scottish American Memorial in the Prince's garden. Due to our former illnesses, we had not given it any special thought. I was then invited to lay a wreath at the foot of the great monument, on behalf of the sculptor, and was very happy to accept, not only feeling it an honour but a personal duty, due to Tait's close association with my Mother, and all that had happened to me through his power and influence, before, and even after his death. It could mean a way of expressing my thanks and appreciation. He always remained a loyal Canadian, and wearing my Maple Leaf Tartan, would be in tribute to him.

Arrangements for the trip were completed, and I was packed and ready to go.

But I never do things the easy way, and this time fate frowned on me.

The plans were to leave on a Sunday, be in Glasgow Monday, Edinburgh Tuesday, and the ceremony to take place Wednesday morning followed by the Lord Provost's luncheon in the City Chambers, and a luncheon the next day at the Roxbororo Hotel given by the American Ambassador.

But the attack came on Thursday night, and early Friday morning my Doctor arrived to send me by ambulance to the hospital with a temperature of 103 degrees, saying it was a severe gall bladder attack. I was not only ill, but terribly concerned.

I must be in Edinburgh not later than Tuesday.

That was an impossibility they said on Saturday.

I had a new doctor, and it was difficult to make him understand that I was a very determined woman, and would be leaving on a plane for Scotland at seven o'clock on Sunday evening. I had great faith in receiving the help I needed from above, and also in miracles, so told him in no uncertain terms that it was up to him to get me better by the next day. I swallowed all the pills he handed out, and accepted the liquid diet with a smile on my face, and it all even stayed down for me.

Next morning I was exalted.

I felt much better.

I peeked at my thermometer before the nurse plucked it from my mouth, and was overjoyed to find it normal.

Jumping out of bed, I dressed quickly, added lipstick, packed my bag, and was all smiles when the Doctor arrived at ten o'clock.

Dr. MacIsaac could hardly believe his eyes.

It took a bit of persuasion. "You can't eat anything" was his offence. "That is fine", was my reply, "because I am anxious to lose some of my 136 pounds". (not realizing I would remove 26 pounds, and retrieve the good figure I once had). I had only applejuice, soup and jelly in the hospital, and knew it was available most anywhere. The Doctor finally agreed that I could call my husband, order the air-taxi and be off into the wild blue yonder at seven o'clock as originally planned. I had stashed two tins of apple juice in my handbag, and probably was the first and only woman to cross the Atlantic on apple juice alone.

Then too, I found that I could exist nicely on good Scottish oatmeal porridge and Scotch broth, the former far from a favourite, but kind to me at this crucial time. Wednesday arrived, and I was in fine fettle for all Edinburgh celebrations.



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